

Nicodemus Visits Jesus at Night

John 3:1-21

Setting:

The Jewish religious leaders were divided into several groups; the two most prominent groups were the Pharisees and Sadducees. The Pharisees came from all classes of people and separated themselves from anything that wasn't Jewish. They strictly followed both the Old Testament laws and the oral traditions handed down through the centuries. Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the ruling council, called the Sanhedrin.

The Sadducees were mainly descended from priestly nobility and believed the Pentateuch (Gen – Deut) alone to be God's Word. The two groups opposed Jesus because He undermined their authority and challenged their views. Jesus and John the Baptist criticized both groups; The Pharisees for being legalistic and ignoring the law's true intent, and the Sadducees for using religion to advance their political position (Matthew 3:7).

Read John 3:1-21

v.1-2 - Nicodemus was one of those impressed by Jesus' signs and believed (John 2:23). He initiated the conversation by referring to Christ as, "Rabbi", meaning, "teacher" or "master", sent by divine appointment ("sent from God"), and possessing a power none of his contemporaries possessed.

Nicodemus was earnestly seeking the truth from this man who he believed was sent from God. His nighttime visit was likely because he was concerned that his fellow Sanhedrin would see him questioning this "teacher who has come from God". After all, Nicodemus was expected to have had all the answers.

What does Matthew 7:7-8 say about how anyone should handle their curiosities about Christ?

v.3- Jesus' reply is something like: "I appreciate your remarks, but here is why you came to see me: unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God".

Nicodemus worshiped at the Temple frequently. He was wealthy, respected, reputable, and religious. He even associated with honorable people. But he needed to be "spiritually" Born Again.

Explain Matthew 19:24, and what (if any) obstacles wealth, respect, reputation, might hinder someone's spiritual growth.

v.5-6 - Jesus was contrasting physical and spiritual birth and declaring the cleansing action of God's Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:26). Read Titus 3:4-5 describe the attributes and actions of God.

Without the new birth of the Spirit, even our good deeds are polluted by the flesh. Yet, everything that a Spirit-led man does can be pleasing to God. How can we use Isaiah 64:6 along with Revelation 2:3-5 as a means of being mindful of the necessity of being spirit-led, rather than relying on our own flesh.

v.8 - Jesus' point to Nicodemus is, you don't understand everything about the wind, but you see its effects. That is how it is with the birth of the Spirit. We don't need to know everything about the new birth before we experience it. Remember how the disciples *who while walking with Christ* didn't understand everything (John 2:22).

After coming to understand that Jesus was the Messiah Nicodemus spoke up boldly in His defense (John 7:50-51). He also accompanied Joseph of Arimathea to collect and wrap the body of Jesus after His crucifixion (John 19:38-40). What benefit has "time" given you as a Christian in regard to your understanding of who Christ is and how he operates?

v.14-15 – **Read Numbers 21:4-9.** The people were not saved by anything they did, but by simply looking to the bronze serpent. They had to trust that something as seemingly foolish as looking at serpent would be sufficient to save them, and surely, some perished because they thought it too foolish to do such a thing. Look up: 1 Corinthians 1:18

v.16 – "Believes in" means more than intellectual awareness or agreement. It means to trust in, to rely on, and to cling to Jesus Christ. God's love saves man from eternal destruction (1 John 4:9-10). What does James 2:19 say about mere awareness?

v.17-18 - Those who reject Christ condemn themselves. We never need to lay the reason for anyone's condemnation upon God. The responsibility is theirs alone. Everyone makes a choice. Not choosing Christ is choosing death.

v.19-21 - Condemning sin need not be notorious sin. The simple demand to be lord of our own lives is enough to deserve condemnation before God. "Hating the light" is demonstrated by some consciously fighting against God, and others express their hatred by simply ignoring His truth and saying to Jesus "You are not worth my time."

In regard to the gift of salvation we've already made a choice; which way have you chosen?

Look up: Joshua 24:14-15